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ABSTRACT

This report discusses the job factors, attitudes and preferences affecting the relative advancement and turnover of men and women in federal careers. The study of advancement utilized the responses of 11,000 men and 15,000 women. Findings included that women were more highly educated, participated as much or more, were older and had more service than men within the same grade. Women and men preferred men supervisors, women did not have as high aspirations as men. Close to 10,000 questionnaires were received for the turnover study. The overall turnover rate for women was consistently higher than for men. Occupation and age had a significant impact on turnover. However, sex differences are greatly reduced when turnover rates are studied within segments of the total group. Another phase of the study concerned work attitudes and expectations. Both men and women agreed on the ideal job aspects and on job satisfaction. (SJ)

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JOB FACTORS, ATTITUDES AND PREFERENCES AFFECTING THE RELATIVE ADVANCEMENT AND TURNOVER OF MEN AND WOMEN IN FEDERAL CAREERS*

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The Commission on the Status of Women, appointed by President Kennedy, early in its work found that there existed too little dependable information concerning the careers of women--their relative advancement, their turnover, the job and personal factors affecting their lives as employees. For the Federal sector, the Civil Service Commission undertook to develop such data in two major studies, in order to permit, as the President's Commission stated, the "substitution of facts for conjecture."

The relative advancement of career women.

The study of advancement covered essentially all professional, technical and administrative occupations with the exception of a few such as Nurses and Investigators where one sex was infrequently represented. Questionnaires were addressed to all women in upper level jobs (now starting at $12,000) and to a 10% random sample of all women in the mid-levels. For comparison, we addressed a 10% random sample of men in upper level jobs and a 5% random sample at lower levels. The report thus is based on responses of over 11,000 men and over 15,000 women (a 93% response rate).

Average differences in salary between men and women overall are historic. They are generally accounted for by sex differences in occupational distributions. However, in this study we found that

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comparison of salaries between men and women is most meaningful within occupational groups. Generally, length of service and level of education affect salary level. But the effect of these factors is quite different in different occupational groups.

Comparisons within grades showed striking differences. Grade for grade, men were younger, and had less service. Grade for grade, women had a higher level of education. Grade for grade, women showed as much or more participation in such career-related activities as professional society membership, publications, and job related training. These data support the common complaint that a woman has to be better just to compete as an equal.

A perennial question in vocational research is the relation of academic preparation to career choice and progression. Is it easier for men to find jobs in fields related to their education? Are women more likely to be forced to choose work for which they have not prepared? We analyzed the relevance of academic background to current occupation. Here again we found wide occupational differences. For example, in administrative work, most employees were not at the B.A. level. Among those who were college trained, relatively more men than women had degrees relevant to the field of work. In accounting, men greatly exceeded women in the percent of degree holders and their relevance. In data processing, a relatively new field at that time, most employees did not have a degree and many women were working at mid-levels; yet at the upper levels, men were greatly predominant. This finding might be traced to the earlier entry of men into this occupation. As technicians women clearly were better educated and their education was more relevant.

In the physical sciences, as expected, almost all had relevant academic preparation. In the social sciences, both men and women showed a heavy proportion of relevant degree holders, and sex differences were apparent only at the lower grades.

What are the attitudes of men and women toward the other sex, as perceived in various job roles? Men clearly believed that women cannot perform as ably as can men either as supervisor or as non-supervisor within the occupational field. On the other hand, most women indicated "no difference" in their evaluation of men and women in these roles. Of the women who did have an opinion, men were considered better as supervisors but women better in non-supervisory positions. Looking at the work roles of assistant, co-worker and supervisor, men strongly preferred men in all of these roles and most strongly as supervisors. Again, most women stated no strong sex preferences. Those few who did have a preference would like a woman as assistant or co-worker and a man as supervisor.

Does direct experience affect these attitudes and preferences? The attitude data were analyzed in terms of whether the respondent had ever had experience as a subordinate of the other sex. For both men and women, previous experience with a woman supervisor clearly reduced the preference for a male in the direction of "no difference."

The women did not aspire to as high a grade as did the men. This limited goal seemed to be related to strong feelings of sex discrimination, especially among the women in the upper grades. At the lower grades, women attributed their poor prospects more to lack of opportunity than to sex discrimination.

Relative turnover rates and reasons

The second major study was designed to learn the reasons for voluntary turnover among career employees and how these reasons related to personal and occupational variables. The sample covered every voluntary quit in a 2-month period throughout the Government. Close to 10,000 questionnaires were received from 80% of all separatees.

The overall turnover rate in this 2-month sample was consistent with other studies. The ratio of turnover rates for women to men ranged from 2.5 to 3 to 1. The overall turnover rate for women is consistently greater than for men. However, a major finding of this study was that sex differences are greatly reduced when turnover rates are studied within segments of the total group. Of the factors studied, occupation and age have the most significant impact on turnover. Women are found largely in clerical and office work, are younger than men on the average, and have fewer years of service. Thus the composition of the work force affects the overall turnover rate. The rates declined steadily for both men and women from the early twenties to the early fifties and concurrently declined with increasing grade level. At the upper grade levels, quit rates are essentially the same for men and women.

The middle-ages of the work-life span are of special interest. For women the turnover rate is lower than that for younger men. This suggests that in staffing positions where turnover is a serious problem, qualified women in the middle-age range would be better employment risks than either younger men or women.

The reasons given by women for leaving the service are more heavily associated with family responsibilities, whereas men leave for better job opportunities and lack of job satisfaction. However, lack of job satisfaction becomes an increasingly important factor for both men and women after age 35 to 40 and until retirement. This group, particularly the women, find less pressure to leave because of family responsibilities and become more concerned with the work itself.

The so-called "hygiene" factors do not appear important for either men or women in comparison to factors intrinsic to the job itself.

Observations on the advancement and turnover studies

These two studies point up some fairly obvious morals. Notions as to the employability and status of women are quite likely to be misleading if they rest on gross sex comparisons without attention to the many variables--occupation, age, vocational preparation, and personal satisfactions, that have an effect on employment, career advancement, and stability.

In the Federal Service, the general policy that appointment and promotion must be made without regard to sex has shrunk to a very small number the list of jobs where restriction to one sex is clearly justified.

Yet, this sound policy may be undercut in operation if the kinds of facts revealed in these studies are ignored. In particular, if male attitudes against women in various work roles and jobs are in fact modified by experience, ~~than~~ then an obvious step would be for managers to find ways, or create ways, to place women in supervisory and other roles where men could then get a first-hand view of their competence (and competition).

Such arrangements may be difficult to work out within normal organization operations. Yet many ad hoc situations can be devised. Task forces, temporary details, training assignments, special work groups--these and other ways can be found to provide for new experiences and perceptions of men toward women at work.

Work attitudes and expectations of young men and women

In recent years concern has centered on the increasingly troublesome instability of younger employees in professional, technical and managerial careers and on their dissatisfactions with Government programs and career opportunities. About two years ago a broad study of these issues was undertaken. As one phase of this study, we undertook to inquire into the attitudes and career expectations of young men and women. From these data we hoped that leads would develop as to what agencies could do to encourage a greater sense of involvement and commitment on the part of these young employees.

Because of time pressure, the study was limited to the Washington Metropolitan Area. Questionnaires were sent to every new employee hired in the previous year who was under 30 and in a professional, technical or administrative job. 2,882 questionnaires (82%) were received from the 3,536 employees so identified. The survey covered the biography of the employees, and their attitudes toward the importance of, and their satisfaction with, 14 major aspects of their jobs. The questionnaire also covered attitudes toward specific job duties and conditions and career

plans. A comparative analysis was made of the responses of the one-third of this group who are female.

As compared to men the females were slightly younger, and slightly lower in level of education. Their highest college degree was more likely to be in English, journalism, languages and the social sciences than in business, engineering, or physical science as compared to men. On the average, they entered the Federal service about one-half a ~~salary~~ grade level below the men, and this differential continued at least during the time covered by the survey.

Expected differences in entry occupations were found--relatively more women in the social sciences and financial management, fewer in physical sciences and engineering.

The most relevant data for our purpose today come from analysis of sex differences in job attitudes and opinions. The respondents were asked to rank 14 aspects of the ideal job. These 14 were derived from an intensive review of the literature and previous research. They are, briefly--personal work accomplishments, training opportunities, relationship with co-workers, intrinsic nature of the work itself, the supervisor's competence, relationship with supervisor, the image of the job as perceived by others, agency goals, environmental conditions, advancement opportunities, salary, recognition, agency management, organization rules and regulations as they affect the respondent.

The striking findings are first, that men and women rank these job aspects essentially the same. They agreed exactly that far most significant

were the work itself, personal work accomplishments, and salary. Least important were the image of the job, the organization's rules and regulations, the environmental conditions, and agency management. Of moderate importance were the factors relating to co-worker and supervisor relationships.

Women are less homogeneous as a group in their rankings, since the variance of each ranking was larger in every case but one.

The impression gained is that, insofar as these 14 job attitudes are concerned, young women are not different from the young men in these occupations.

These same 14 factors were also rated on a 5-point scale of the degree of satisfaction with these factors in their present jobs. Both men and women were most highly satisfied with their relations with co-workers. They perceived their supervisors as cooperative and competent. They were satisfied with their agency's goals and their own job's image. Both women and men were moderately satisfied or well satisfied with those job aspects relating to the work itself. Both sexes were most critical of their environmental conditions, their training, and their agency's management.

A majority of these new employees as a group were satisfied with their job as a whole, the men somewhat more than the women. Yet 18% of the men and 25% of the women were not satisfied! And almost a fifth of each group was neither satisfied or dissatisfied. This stark finding alone justifies a search for the sources of dissatisfaction, and for meaningful remedies.

To get a clearer picture of the specifics in the work situation which might affect management behavior, we related the ranking of the 14 job factors, the rated degree of satisfaction of these factors, and responses to 74 job characteristics relating to these factors. This analysis revealed four clusters. One cluster comprised two important job aspects with which the employees were fairly well satisfied. These are the work itself and personal work accomplishments. In general, these employees felt that they were kept busy, that their jobs were suitably difficult, and that there was frequent feedback or knowledge of progress. The most common complaints? Too much time on clerical work, too little chance for creativeness, not enough challenging work.

A second cluster covered current salary and advancement opportunity. With these, employees were moderately satisfied. Yet many felt that they would be better off on both counts in private industry.

A third cluster reflects only moderate importance but a high level of satisfaction. It relates to the interpersonal environment of the job--relations with co-workers, relations with supervisors, recognition received and supervisor's competence.

The fourth cluster deals with the environment and image of the job. Included here were training effectiveness, the way the organization is run, physical working ~~condtions~~ conditions, the organization's rules and regulations as they affect the trainee, and the impression the job makes on family and friends. In general, they judged these aspects not very important, but are content with them. Considering the fact that practically all of the respondents are at least at the college graduate level, it is surprising that 23% of the

men and a full 1/3 of the women have no definite career plans. Slightly over 1/3 of each group plans to stay in the Government, the rest plan to leave for other employers.

These employees are career-minded; very few deny career plans. Over 50% of men and women plan to stay in their current field. 18% of the men and 6% of the women want to go into general management; a small proportion wants to change fields; 12% of the men, and 17% of the women are uncertain about their career choices.

In the questionnaire and in several open-ended questions, both men and women express a need for better communications with top management. They say, for example, "Management fails to explain to us the reasons for its policies and actions." "Management doesn't solicit our ideas outside of formal suggestion systems." "We do not usually participate in planning our own career development." "We aren't involved in agency planning." Behind these dissatisfactions are unfulfilled expectations, many of them made by recruiters. Apparently these young men and women were led to expect well managed programs, vigorous training, stimulating work assignments. Yet to their credit their responses show clearly that they were not so much concerned with satisfaction of their personal needs as with how to create change in their agency programs.

Commentary

These findings made a significant input to the intensive review by agencies of their programs and plans for attracting and retaining young talent. Thus, the recommendations coming out of this review reflect deep

concern for satisfying the career aspirations of young men and women. The employing departments were urged to open up communication and to increase youth participation in policy formulation and review. It was recognized, however, that to make this more than a pious platitude requires the creation of organizational structures--committees, forums, and inter-agency exchanges. Agencies were also urged to improve training, to offer closer and better supervision, to enrich jobs, to support rapid advancement consistent with demonstrated performance, and, by a variety of ways, to recognize outstanding performance. In view of the career instability of young employees and their need for assistance in defining their goals and planning their own course of action, the study also urged continued education and counseling. These should be not only within the agency, but also by assignments in other agencies or in other occupations where such training would serve to broaden the horizons of these young men and women by greater involvement in public affairs.